HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

O.H 30

LLOYD & NONA TEVIS

Interviewed by

Patricia Young

April 9,1980

INTERVIEWEES: LLOYD & NONA TEVIS

INTERVIEWER: Patricia Young

SUBJECT:

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TRANSCRIBER: Linda A. Jantzen

PY: and it's four o'clock in the afternoon.

Let's begin with how you both happened to come to the valley and when that was, and what your involvement has been since that time.

LT: We'll start with the oldest first, right?

PY: Okay.

NT: How I happened to come here?

PY: Right.

LT: You came first.

NT: My mother came here originally from New York for her health.

LT: That was when?

NT: I suppose thirty-seven, eight, somewhere in there. And she stayed for three months in the winter, rented a house in Palm Springs. Liked is to well that she finally bought some property in what is now the middle of Rancho Mirage.

And everyone thought she was crazy. They said it was blow sand. It was a terrible waste of money. She paid forty dollars an acre for it. And she built this house, which to have been completed just before World War II broke out. Just before December of 1941. So, of course, then, you know, it was almost impossible to complete the house. But we finally did move in, I forget, I was a little girl then, I suppose February or March of 1942. And it was a very modern home for its time with glass windows all along one side. Fifty-four feet long and twelve feet high, and the siding, outside was all redwood, just plain redwood boards. And plywood inside. And everyone said it will never last through a summer. The windows will be pitted by sand. The redwood will warp. The plywood inside will split. And Mother said she really didn't expect to see the house standing when she came back the next year. (laughter) But I came, you see, because she came for her health.

LT: Who was your mother on the stage?

NT: She had been Jane Cooper. She was a fairly successful actress of a very distant vintage. She played opposite John Barrymore and Richard Bennett, and people of that time. And her maiden name was Cooper and that was her

stage name. So she then for something to do planted some date trees. And we had about ten acres or a little more maybe of dates and grapefruit. And Mother took a great interest in that. And during the war there was quite a demand for dates. The market went up, and it was really rather pleasantly successful. My father was actually the angel behind all this, and he poopooed its financial success. But Mother did make a paying enterprise of it and she was very proud of her accomplishment. So that's what brought me here originally.

PY: Where was this property located?

NT: It's half a section between Country Club Drive and Frank Sinatra Drive on the east side of the wash, that whole . . .

LT: Now known as Springs West, which is still undeveloped land exactly as it was when Nona's mother purchased it except for the remains of the house which she built which just since burned down.

NT: And I guess she must have purchased it in 1940 probably, since she started that building in the summer of 1941.

LT: The north end of it borders the Tamarisk Country Club and was south, right south of the, I guess you'd really say it, yes, north and south, it was on the south side.

NT: Yes.

LT: Borders the Thunderbird Country Club.

NT: That's right.

LT: Neither one was there at the time that they bought the property and built the house.

PY: So were you aware of the development of those country clubs?

NT: Oh,yes. And when Thunderbird was first built, Frank Bogert, former mayor of Palm Springs, was the manager there. And he was awfully nice to us as a neighbor, you know, just friendly and helpful. My father was not out here with us most of the time. Mother was alone and he always said, if you have any trouble, call me, and so forth. We were very much aware of it. And Mother did say as the desert began to develop, she said, I'm soon going to have the only piece of undeveloped desert, and I ought to charge admission.

LT: Didn't Frank give your mother a preview of the club?

NT: He gave her a preview of the club before the main opening. He insisted that she go in the men's room because he said it's the only chance you'll get. I don't know if she was highly gratified by that experience or not, but . . . (laughter)

LT: But that started at that time more as almost a dude ranch

didn't it?

NT: It did, started as a dude ranch.with emphasis on horses, and they had little Jim Connas every Sunday afternoon or every weekend, something like that.

LT: That is the origin of the Thunderbird Country Club, believe it or not.

PY: Oh, I had heard that people went there for barbecues before the country club was there.

LT: Yes.

NT: Yes, it was more like a guest ranch, I guess, really, you know, with emphasis on horses and riding. And, of course, Frank was tremendously interested in equestrian activities.

LT: Then it just evolved into the other, didn't it?

NT: I think so.

LT: With no sudden break or change.

NT: No.

LT: To build a golf course and then gradually the emphasis shifted from horses to golf.

NT: And he went up to manage a similar place in northern California. I forget the name of it. And I think that's when sort of the change away from the horses . . .

LT: Silverado?

NT: I don't think so. I think that was later.

PY: Oh, Bogert managed Silverado Country Club?

LT: Maybe I'm wrong. That's what came to mind, but maybe not. Maybe not.

NT: I'm not sure about that.

PY: That's very interesting. No one else has talked about the development of Thunderbird.

NT: At that time, Country Club Drive must have been there. Yes, it was, because there was a ranch to the east of Thunderbird called the Red Roof Ranch. And that must have been the access road to that ranch. But what I thought this was all about, I remember that we could never find that road when we'd come home at night from Palm Springs. We finally got a little red reflector light and stuck out there on a stick so that we could find the road to turn in on. It was just pitch black out there. Nothing, you know. And Mother's friends in the east said, aren't you terrified of being out there alone? And she said, well, what's to be afraid of? There are only coyotes and they won't bother me.

LT: I think it would be interesting to describe about the, oh, what happened when the White River was flowing since people today are screaming to high heaven because they don't have bridges everywhere. What was your situation?

NT: Well, we were flooded in. You see there was no road to the east. There was no way of getting out except Highway 111 and we'd have to cross the wash, so we . . .

LT: From Highway 111 to the house, their private road crossed the White Water River. So if the White Water River was flowing, they were stuck.

NT: So we stayed where we were, of course, and one Christmas my father and aunt and uncle came up from the east to spend the Christmas holidays with us. And there had been a lot of rain and quite a storm. They were late getting by train to San Bernardino. And the wash was just raging. Of course, they couldn't get across. They stayed with my godmother in Palm Springs, who was also an eastern transplant like Mother. And so they came the next morning and got a neighbor who had a little fishing rowboat, and they were going to attempt to come across. We all got on the other side and my mother and my grandmother and I forget who else, and we said, don't come, stay away. We were afraid they'd get into this little boat and be swamped, you know. And my aunt Anita said that they suggested that she get in the boat first. (laughter) Anyhow, they didn't do it. And the water would recede in two or three days, rarely more than four,

as I recall. But this happened, you know, frequently, two, three, four times a winter. And we really didn't think anything of it. We didn't feel it was a great inconvenience. We had plenty of food in the house. We had a freezer as well as a refrigerator stocked with food and lots of canned things. You know, I mean, it was no . . .

LT: It was part of the fun, the excitement, of living in the desert. Made it different from living in the city.

NT: I suppose, you know, if there had been a severe medical reason or something, we would have been quite upset, but you know, you don't think of things like that. You don't go around expecting somebody to have a heart attack. At least we didn't. We just never thought about it. My grandmother was an elderly lady. She never worried about her health because she was marooned for a couple of days.

PY: Did anyone in the area use four-wheel drive vehicles or any kind of vehicles to get out across the desert?

NT: Well, I don't know that they had four-wheel drive vehicles. The Army had jeeps, of course, and I guess they must have been, but you didn't hear about four-wheel drive vehicles. I imagine someone in a pickup truck could have, you know, because once the sand is packed down by rain, I think a

pickup maybe could have gotten through. I just don't know.

PY: Were you aware, were you living here enough at the time to be aware of what was happening at Rancho Mirage as it was developing?

NT: Yes. Kind of. I wish I'd paid more attention because, you know, when you're young and in school those things don't interest you really. Rancho Mirage, I remember it's being started by a realtor, whose name I forget. You probably know who it was. And Palm Desert was non-existent. Patton trained his forces there. His main encampment was there at Palm Desert. And then a little collection of houses or a store or two opened up on the north side of the highway, and that was known as Palm Village. And Rancho, there was a big realtor's sign for Rancho Mirage and Palm Dell was the name of an area that they were trying to feature about where the White Sun area is now. And we all sort of made fun of it. We thought it was really kind of silly to try to build up anything out here. It was so far removed from Palm Springs, which was the main spot. Cathedral City was just a wide stretch of the road. I don't know if that answers it well enough.

PY: Oh, I was just curious whatever you remember about it. I know there have been several developers who tried to start things here, starting in the twenties with some rejection.

LT: It's over there where the White Sun is now.

PY: Yes. And then there had been, I can't remember the name of the second man who came in that started another development that actually probably

LT: Well, the fellow who actually started it, the residential part of Rancho Mirage on the other side of the highway from here, his name was Blankenschimm, Blankenheim, something like that, do you have that name. Is that right?

PY: I just got it out of one of the White Sun Roundoffs, and I don't know.

LT: They have some errors, though, in that brochure. But we've got all this information here filed away in the archives. (chuckle)

PY: We can dig that out.

LT: It's better than my memory and mind, but anyway, he was a developer of Smoketree Ranch. And that was his intent, to develop in this cove something comparable to what he had done in Smoketree. He was from Pasadena, and he went

into partnership with another man whose name escapes me. And they never got very far. I guess the war intervened. And then, of course, after that Ronald Buckingham, you heard took over the properties. And it was relatively what it is now.

PY: Pardon?

LT: Then it began to grow into what it is now.

PY: Where is Ron Button now?

LT: He sold his house here. He'd be in Beverly Hills. Is that where he lives? Let's see, yes, he lives in Beverly Hills near Sol Lesser, right. Haven't seen him for quite awhile.

PY: I guess the next question is, it sounds like you've been here for awhile, too.

LT: No, I'm just telling you now something of what I've read about.

PY: Oh.

LT: See, and for one, well, for a particular reason I at one time assembled quite a bit of the history of Rancho Mirage in order to prove a particular case. That's when we were having the big battle with Palm Desert over who should get this area right here, the so-called Clancey Lane area, and the issue was to be decided by Lafco, which

is a local agency for Mashen Commission, which of the two proposed cities would have this area. And Palm Desert based its case on the statement that historically this area had always been a part of Palm Desert. And I took very strenuous exception to that statement, and therefore prepared an historical treatise to show that actually this had always been part of Rancho Mirage historically. So it was somewhat biased history that we prepared to present to Lafco. And then we won the case. Lafco ruled in our favor and so when the two cities incorporated, the so-called Clancey Lane area was put into Rancho Mirage instead of Palm Desert. But all that took place long before I was here.

PY: How did you come?

LT: What?

PY: How did you happen to go to the area?

LT: By marrying Nona. (laughter)

NT: That's a slightly distorted . . . (laughter)

LT: No, we were both away then.

NT: Yes.

LT: But I was working with the University of California, and we were at Davis at that time. And there came an opportunity to join the new laboratory that was being

proposed by the California Institute of Technology. They needed someone down here to take charge of that, and that combined with the fact that Nona's old house was still here with nobody living in it.

NT: My mother had died.

LT: It seemed like a very ideal situation, so we moved down here and I took that position and we lived in the old homestead, so to speak.

PY: When was this.

LT: Until it was subsequently sold by her father a few years later and then we came over here. We came here, what, 1957? Something like that. Right. Yes. And lived in the house that she's been describing.

NT: And that house burned down maybe four or five years ago. We were living in this house. It was fairly recently.

LT: Yes.

NT: It had been sold to Mr. Garner from Virginia, owned it.

LT: Fleetwood Garner.

NT: And it burned, they were in the house at the time. They don't really know how it happened or anything. But burned completely.

PY: So it turned out that all the materials that it had been built with were actually very sound for the use . . .

NT: Very sound. The only problem was we had such terrible sandstorms. They seemed to be worse in those days, and I suppose it's because there was no developing to, you know, cover the sand. But when the force of the wind would hit these glass windows, which faced the two mountain peaks in the pass so you'd get this gorgeous view. Mother had it sort of angled, you know, facing this view. We were afraid they'd cave in. We could see the glass actually bend, and sometimes when those storms were so bad, we'd just stay out of the living room. We just really were afraid. So she had these sliding shutters made, just like sliding doors, to pull across them. And we did have to do that. Whether they would have ever blown in or not, I don't know. These were find out. And whether the glass would have pitted, I don't know, but the redwood stood up beautifully and that plywood was just gorgeous until the day it burned. She'd had it treated with just a light, light coating of white paint rubbed on and rubbed off. And then a clear sort of wax put on it, and it never turned yellowish or orangy, the way plywood sometimes does. It was just beautiful, wasn't it?

LT: Yes. It was gorgeous.

PY: How long did she maintain the date gardens?

NT: They're still there. Fleetwood Garner has continued to maintain them. Oh, it's the boy breathing over there.

LT: No, when we came down to live here, Mrs. Lake's, Nona's mother's Mexican foreman was still operating the place and running the date groves as a commercial operation.

NT: Yes.

LT: Right?

NT: Yes.

LT: Which continued until her father sold the place, and then Fleetwood Garner, well, I don't know what, did he continued the date operation, I guess.

NT: Well, he's kept the trees alive and cared for.

LT: Yes, he's kept the trees alive. Maybe that's all you can say.

NT: What he did with the crop and all, we don't know.

PY: Do you feel that that was unusual for Rancho Mirage at that time, to continue with date gardens? In other words, were there, I mean other than Kersten's and a few other places, there weren't many date gardens here.

LT: Oh, yes. All this area, a lot more that you don't see now. All of where the Sunrise Country Club is.

PY: Right.

LT: Remember, Rancho Mirage was primarily an agricultural area, and the only residential part was this that was built up here on the other side of the highway. There was two Rancho Mirages. They were all called Rancho Mirage in those days, I guess. Up there was the residential area, and then these were farms. All of this area out through here. So the date grove that your mother planted at the time, that was just in the day when they were still expanding agriculture.

NT: It was small compared to the others. And all of that Peterson cove ranch, which is named, the Peterson cove area, you know where that is? More or less opposite city hall, isn't it? It would be on that side on . . .

LT: It's between the Blue Skies Trailer Park and the White Water River, the wash.

NT: Named for Mr. Peterson.

LT: You wouldn't even be aware of it unless you went down in there. You don't see it from the highway.

NT: He had fields and fields of strawberries, and one time during the war when it was so terribly hard to get any pickers, I went over there and helped picked strawberries.

LT: And then Phil Boyd grew tomatoes along the Warburton Ranch, which was right next to your mother's place.

NT: That's right.

LT: Where he had a commercial tomato-growing operation there for awhile.

NT: Next to Mother and beyond Thunderbird.

LT: The other side of Thunderbird.

NT: Yes. And then where the, all where the springs is now, along Thompson Road, that was all date gardens. That was Norm Waters, wasn't it, one of his ranches.

LT: Yes, right. And citrus.

NT: Yes, dates and citrus.

LT: In the early days they also grew a lot of alfalfa here.

NT: Yes, that's true.

LT: And grapes, lots of grapes. Thompson seedless entirely.

PY: Now further out Clancey there looked like there's some old grape vineyards that are . . .

LT: Right, yes. And this new development here, that was mostly a vineyard.

PY: Which new development?

LT: Well, if you go down Clancey, these new houses are being built, right in that area.

PY: Oh.

LT: That was a date grove and the rest was all vineyards.

NT: And then on the left as you go down Clancey Lane, those

were all vineyards. And they were being harvested for a number of years after we moved to this house. That was, whose property is that? Still is, I think.

LT: Herb?

NT: Well, the vineyards over here on this . . .

LT: Oh, Gur . . .

NT: Gurley.

LT: Gurley.

NT: Gurley. Doc Gurley's place. He said he ran it at a loss for five years, just finally had to give up. Mainly because they came in just a little too late. Apparently the ones down in the Imperial Valley come in earlier, and by the time these come in, the big crop in the central valley around Fresno and all through there is coming in and they can outprice them. They can sell them for less is my understanding. But all what Sunrise is now, those were date gardens. We used to ride horseback through all of them.

LT: Well, this area was really indescribably beautiful even when I first knew it, when we first came down here, because it was then all either agricultural or virgin desert. And that's, of course, when we did lots of horseback riding because there was lots of places to ride.

PY: Was that an important part of life here in Rancho Mirage for a lot of people?

LT: No, I don't think everyone in Rancho Mirage for a lot of people, not like it was at Palm Springs which you knew went through, the early days it was really a dude ranch. That was the neat attraction, but I think the White Sun, of course, dates from a fairly early time. That was the only resort really in this area. And then a few people had horses. I don't think it was ever an important part of Rancho Mirage.

NT: No, I don't either.

PY: Certainly along Clancey Lane has left its mark. I think, what's this next to you, Manana Ranch, something.

NT: Rancho Manana.

PY: Rancho Manana.

LT: Yes, on down a ways.

PY: Yes.

LT: Right.

PY: Is that older or is that a new?

LT: No, no, that's old. That's quite old. That was the, what's that slogan? Baby's Astoria. That was built by the, what is astoria?

NT: Castoria.

LT: Castoria. Castoria. Babies always cry for Castoria.

NT: Castoria.

LT: That was built by the heir to the Castoria fortune.

PY: Oh!

LT: She came down here and kept horses and built that. And at the stables you still see those original ones which she built, isn't it? We've heard just a great deal since then.

NT: That house has gone through many changes of ownership has been lose, renovation.

LT: Yes, and then Greta Garbo used to have a hideout in one of them, now called the Mary Aldred House which is just beyond Rancho Manana, it was just a little shack there which in those days there's no electricity, no running water, just outside. But she could come down here and be completely isolated. And, of course, this was a gorgeous area then.

NT: Yes. Yes, it was.

LT: All the plantings were at its peak. Actually, I guess about the time or shortly after I came, agriculture started to decline, didn't it?

NT: Yes, and I suppose again the . . .

LT: It was economics, not because of the pressure of develop-

ments coming in. That really hadn't started yet. But it was just no longer becoming economically feasible to do that kind of agriculture right here.

NT: Well, the Junipero Serra program, if you're familiar with that, I think made a big difference here because that had gotten pretty cheap labor. And when it was, you know, controlled and so forth, the men had decent working conditions. We employed a couple of braceros on the ranch, on Mother's ranch. And the state people came through and checked their living quarters all the time. I mean, you had to give them adequate quarters and the minimum wage, whatever it was, I forget. They didn't mind climbing these date trees, you see. You could hardly get Americans to do that, so I think that is really what hurt the date industry. So probably about the time you got down here was when agricultural work was beginning to sluff off.

LT: But Clancey Lane was certainly still going strong.

NT: Clancey Lane was going strong, and all of our Sunrise Hague's dates were there.

LT: That's right. Hague had a big date operation there.

NT: And we used to ride through those trees all the time. See, there would be these service roads along a big

block of either dates or citrus so the trucks could get in and out. And they were dirt roads and they were always well packed. And they didn't mind if horses rode on them. There was never any problems and it's wonderful riding. And sort of partially shaded, you know, and in the hot weather that was increasingly pleasant.

LT: This was the real atmosphere that was Rancho Mirage in the early days and the reason why the name Rancho is in the name of the place.

PY: How did it get its name?

LT: This realtor who Blankenscheim, or whatever his name was, I can't remember too well, our developer, he and his wife and his partner were having a picnic up in the cove there, and they looked out in this direction out over all the agricultural fields of dates and citrus and so on. She said, and this is just like a mirage, meaning something that is so beautiful, you know, and wanted to call it mirage, but in those days when Palm Springs was a dude ranch area, you needed the word rancho in it to have sales appeal. So they combined with this strange combination, rancho and mirage to get the name.

PY: That's a completely different story that Amy Croft tells.

LT: Well. What she says is the authentic story because I got it from the wife of this gentleman that I'm talking about.

And, you see, Helen Bangler, when she did the original history to that White Sun brochure, she did not know about this chap. I've talked to Helen since then and Helen had actually gone over and talked to this lady who I believe is still alive. You might want to interview her. See, Paul Lazar can get you in contact with her.

PY: Good Paul Lazar.

LT: Yes. He's the interior decorator here at Rancho Mirage.

PY: Okay.

NT: Are you sure I can't talk anyone into some iced tea because I'm going to have a little.

LT: Okay. And so, since that was . . .

PY: All right, I'll have some.

LT: That was the original, the origin of Rancho Mirage was in this kind of rural atmosphere, but many of us for a long time have wanted to do was to preserve a little bit of that as Rancho Mirage changed into something else. I think that's a nice and good thing to do and that people will appreciate it in the future. We realize we can't just preserve it exactly as it was, but that's the reason why the city has kind of made Rancho Mirage zoned a little bit different from the rest, and why many people don't understand that's why we have closed Rancho Mirage to

through traffic, I mean Clancey Lane to through traffic, because if that is an open thoroughfare, you're going to completely hope of holding the rural atmosphere here is going to be lost. But that is what we are trying to do in this region. And whether it's going to succeed or not, I don't know.

PY: Region, you mean Clancey Lane area.

LT: What we call the Clancey Lane area which runs roughly from the White Water River up to Country Club Drive and then is bounded by Bob Hope on the west and Monterey on the east.

PY: What about Hank Gogerty's developments out here? Do you feel that they established a pattern of growth that is soaring Desert Aire

LT: By that you mean rural desert area?

PY: And that, you know, the track that he wanted to put in.

LT: That he tried to get in.

PY: Yes.

LT: Yes, now that track, for example, if that had come in, that would have made a very drastic and sudden change in Rancho Mirage, but it didn't succeed, as you know. And the Desert Aire didn't have that much of an impact but it was the beginning of the type of thing that was ultimately

going to come in and take over. Growing up on that very site, as you know, finally the Marriott Hotel.

PY: Right.

LT: My uncle used to play polo a lot over there at Desert Aire.

PY: Why don't we wait until we . . .

LT: Yes. He came here very frequently in the winter to play polo. And then he had a home at El Dorado. Well, he lived at one time right out here, right opposite the Tamarisk Country Club gate on which is now Frank Sinatra Drive. Which was then, what was the old name for Frank Sinatra Drive?

NT: Pardon me?

LT: What was the old name for Frank Sinatra?

NT: Wonder Palms Road.

LT: Wonder Palms Road, yes. Right, Wonder Palms.

NT: Named for the hotel right across the street.

LT: Yes.

NT: The Wonder Palms.

PY: Oh, I didn't know that.

LT: Yes. That was the Wonder Palms Hotel.

PY: Where is that located?

LT: Well, wasn't that right by the, yes, that's, as you're going that way, it would be immediately after you passed

the Tamarisk Country Club gate. Isn't that right, Nona?

NT: Yes.

LT: They've all been refurbished now. You'll see a lot of little, you may not even notice that they're old buildings, that's what they are, because they've just recently been redone. And that was the old . . .

PY: It's still operating as a hotel?

LT: No. I think they've changed . . . they've taken the old guest cottages and turned them into, I don't know whether they're condominiums or what, but they're little small houses that they're selling or have sold. I guess the old clubhouse is completely gone.

NT: I guess so. I haven't been back in there.

LT: Must have been. But that was quite a going concern in its day.

PY: When did that start? I've never even . . . No one's ever mentioned it.

LT: Really? No, that was Well, when I came here, it was going full blast, wasn't it?

NT: Yes.

LT: We used to go there quite a bit. It was sort of the place around here.

NT: I can't remember, I can't remember when it started because

the period there, we weren't here, and while I was away at college, I wasn't here much either. And the summers were pretty hot and again the heat bothered Mother, too. And so we visited my aunt and grandmother in Monterey for the summers. I guess there's a period in there in the early and mid fifties when development took place that I really wasn't too aware of. From 1942 when we moved into the house, up until the first of the fifties, I'm sort of . . . I know I was aware of what was going on then. I was sort of absent until we came down here in 1957.

PY: When did Wonder Palms start? Did it start in the forties?

NT: I don't think so, but I couldn't be sure. Oh, I'm sure it didn't start until after the war because nothing was built until after the war including Thunderbird. And Thunderbird was the first thing that started.

LT: Right.

NT: And then Tamarisk Country Club was some while after that. And I'm sure Wonder Palms came after Tamarisk, so it must have been into the fifties anyhow.

LT: Right.

PY: When you say it was the place to go, it obviously was more than just a hotel. It was a restaurant?

NT: Yes.

LT: Almost a night club, wasn't it?

NT: Well, they had entertainment.

LT: Yes.

NT: I don't think it was really . . .

LT: Well, anyway, there was nothing else around here in those days comparable, you know. It was the place to go for that sort of thing compared to what we have now.

PY: People talk about the Desert Aire Hotel as being the place where they would go because there there were a lot of activities or something.

LT: Yes.

PY: Around there.

LT: That's right.

NT: That was also.

LT: Yes. Yes. Very definitely. And there was the old Desert Aire and the new Desert Aire.

NT: That's right.

LT: Two totally different

NT: Yes. There weren't any restaurants as such for many years. I suppose the Desert Aire had one of the few. All this restaurant row was nonexistent, you may well believe. So I guess that's why it would be, thought

those places were, you know . . .

LT: Otherwise, you'd go into Palm Springs for a kind of a fancy restaurant.

PY: It sounds like from what you're saying that most of the people here were either part-time or full-time ranchers and that there weren't a lot of people in the area, Rancho Mirage area, who were, I'm talking about the forties now and the fifties, who were here, living here permanently either doing some kind of business or living here part-time, you know, vacationing.

NT: That's true. I don't think there were many vacationers here at all. And there were so few businesses in Rancho Mirage. There was a gas station, I can remember that. I think we went to Palm Springs mostly and sometimes to Cathedral City to market. I don't think there was a market in Rancho Mirage in the forties as I recall. Or at least not much of one. And I don't think it had become a retirement hum for people at all at that stage.

PY: What about the sense of community here? Was there one, you know. You're talking about Clancey Lane. I'm getting the feeling that there wasn't a coherent Rancho Mirage community, but rather the smaller one.

LT: That's right. Well, there was the, there was this

agricultural area which was more than what we call just the Clancey Lane area now. And you interviewed Mrs. Clancey so you've got the background of the people who came from, what was it?

NT: Long Beach.

LT: Santa Monica. Santa Monica group. Now that was a coherent group, and I think that the ranching people did make sort of the unit. Then there was the residential area that started on the other side of the highway up at the cove, what we called old Rancho Mirage and they now call it the Magnesia Falls area. And that was the second group of people who, I guess some of those were possibly retired. I don't know just who all they were, but not wealthy people but anyway they had small, modest homes up there. And then these two groups would meet at the post office. In other words, these people coming, getting across the White Water River, going up to get their mail every day and the other people coming down from the cove. And that would be the only, I guess, really intermingling. I doubt if there was much otherwise a sense of this being one whole community in those days at all.

PY: How was it when you came in the late fifties?

LT: That's about how it was pretty much. Except there were lots of people living there by that time.

NT: Yes. I think there was much more of a feeling of community then as with, I mean, that part of Rancho Mirage up on the hillside.

LT: Yes. Well, that part of the

NT: Yes.

LT: Yes, but what I'm saying, there were two separate communities. There was that part and that definitely had always had a very definite community, sense of community, the area of the cove area up there. That's one unit. Then the second unit is the agricultural area down here. But they weren't, I think they hardly considered themselves as the same, you know, or as part of the same community.

NT: I don't know.

LT: When the name Rancho Mirage first began to be applied, then when we showed our case to Lafco, all the people around here didn't kind of refer to themselves as being in the Rancho Mirage area at least. There was no defined boundaries.

PY: Was that true of the ranches around your mother's home? Did they consider themselves as just a part of Palm

Springs or . . .

NT: I think in the early days they probably considered themselves just an outgrowth of Palm Springs.

LT: Or they were, now you're talking about the Tamarisk area, too, the Duvall ranches you see.

NT: Yes.

LT: Date groves. Now that was definitely, that was with Cathedral City because that's where they went for all their shopping and whatnot, either Cathedral City or the Palm Springs area. They didn't come down here. Would you agree with that, Pat?

NT: Yes, I would.

LT: Definitely oriented towards Cathedral City.

NT: And you see Cathedral City did have a little more of a nucleus of business district and quite a large residential district even then. Nothing like what it is now.

LT: But even today that's where the Tamarisk area does its shopping is close to Cathedral City and out this way.

NT: And it developed as a poor man's Palm Springs, you know.

PY: Cathedral City?

NT: Cathedral City did.

PY: Now moving along . . .

LT: But this area always, the whole area, never considered

itself as part of Palm Desert, in spite of what the Palm Desert people may claim. I'm positive of that from the research that I did. And there was a big gap between here and Palm Desert in those days.

NT: Oh, yes.

LT: Totally. You know, vacant land, vacant desert.

PY: Did you find that people went to the Shadow Mountain Club after it opened?

NT: Yes, they did, definitely. That was considered, well, that was about the only place that, I mean there was swimming, tennis and I think they had a little pitch and putt course. And then they had entertainment.

LT: Your mother was very interested in that.

NT: Yes, she was.

LT: She was going out there.

NT: Yes.

LT: Yes.

NT: Food was always lousy. (laughter) But aside from that.

PY: Well, there are other things to the staff of life, you know.

NT: Yes. (laughter)

PY: Did people tend to rally around the concept of this as a community when incorporation came up?

LT: They rallied around, if you must know the bitter truth, they rallied around to oppose a claim of Palm Desert to the Eisenhower Medical Center. And that's what united Rancho Mirage and actually incorporated it as one was because Palm Desert was claiming Eisenhower Medical Center. And I think it's the silliest sort of thing that there was this terrible battle between this area and that area as to who has the Eisenhower Medical Center. It was a big prestige thing, you know. And so, and we wanted to incorporate the area, we used that as the way to get everybody united. We said if you don't unite as Rancho Mirage, you're going to be taken up by Palm Desert and you're going to lose the Eisenhower Medical Center.

NT: It was a rallying crowd.

LT: Yes, it was.

NT: And there was vacant land between Avenue 44, about there, a big vacant stretch before you got into Palm Desert. They really had no justifiable claim on Eisenhower Medical Center way down the road here. But for prestige reasons, they wanted it also. And that was the rallying crowd.

LT: When you get your archives established, I think that probably be the logical place, I think I have the only copy left now, and I hope I still have it, I'm sure that

I do, of all that documentary evidence that we put together. Every little thing from the early days about the history to try to show that this was Rancho Mirage instead of Palm Desert. As I say, it was biased history, but still we covered a lot of interesting facts. Like, oh, just bills for example for a water company out here. And what name did they use on their bill heading and that sort of thing. And a lot of stuff about the early days to the Eisenhower Medical Center coming in here and how first the Hopes called it Rancho Mirage. Then all of a sudden they changed over to Palm Desert, started calling it Palm Desert. So we have all this in a great big book. I think most of the copies have been destroyed. I hope I have one left.

PY: I hope so, too.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2:

PY: When did you actually get on the city council then? Was that the first one?

LT: Yes. When it incorporated because I was In fact, incorporation at Rancho Mirage was actually born right in this room because it was the people in Clancey Lane who wanted to preserve this rural atmosphere

against what we saw was coming, and we saw that the county was going to allow anything to take place, and that we were going to lose what we cherished here. And the only way that we were going to stop this was by having our own local government of community people. Now prior to that in 1970, Palm Desert had tried to take us in and we had opposed that for the same reason, because we felt that Palm Desert was going to be run by people who really wouldn't care about preserving the rural character of this area, wouldn't give a darn about it. So in incorporating Rancho Mirage, we united three groups; the Clancey Lane group, we got together then with the people on the residential area and old Rancho Mirage, the Magnesia Falls area, and then also the Thunderbird Country Club group. It was very necessary to have them in order to get a big enough area that would be accepted by the powers of the deep. And that was the actual origin of the city of Rancho Mirage.

PY: How was it decided to build initially city hall?

LT: To build?

PY: Yes.

LT: If there were no real estate offices. None had been used. That tepee down there.

PY: Was a real estate office?

LT: That was a real estate office (chuckle). For a great big development of all the mountainside back of where city hall is now. You go back there you'll find there's a network from roads that had been built to the man that had the baker. Planned all that for development, way a long time ago. And when his wife sued him for divorce, the whole thing collapsed. And the office had never been used. It always sat there for a number of years vacant.

NT: It's Lee Fitzhughes.

NT: In the early evening or at dusk, you know, right after the sun went down, I suppose the air getting cooler held a little more moisture and all, and you would smell the scent of the desert. You know, this pungent aromatic sagey smell. You never smell that anymore, now that I stop and think about it. And the desert really did have a distinctive odor. I suppose it still does if you get out far enough. But you just don't smell it. And after a rain, I can remember that wonderful smell of the wet creosote bushes which sort of pungent and strong. You wouldn't want too big a dose of it, but just in the moist air after the rain, it was kind of nice. Well,

when it rains here, we've had plenty of rain this winter, I can't remember smelling any wet creosote bushes. Sort of interesting.

PY: Where do you ride now? It seems like it's all taken over.

NT: Well, it practically has. And, really, Lloyd and I do very little riding here in the winters anymore, which isn't all the fault of the building. Other things have happened, you know. This is the first year that both our daughters have been away at school, and I've been very busy with them. But I've become busy with other things. And he, God knows, is busy. And it's just hard to find the time. And I can't blame it all on the development. But it's true. We used to go with friends of ours who kept their horses near. Every weekend we would ride from here and watch the polo game over at El Dorado, the country club. And except for crossing Highway 111, we were never on any paved road. We went along these date groves, as I told you, and we plotted it out on a map one time and we figured out that it was about a twelve and a half or thirteen mile round trip. So that made a really nice ride. And we wouldn't watch the whole game usually. It would take too long. We had

to get back before dark. But it was fun. So now for riding there's this equestrian trail through Rancho Mirage and that's another long involved story. But the wash is supposed to be an equestrian route all the way down to the Salton Sea. And a group of horse people got together and formed this committee known as the Pathes to the Sea Trails Committee, I guess. Path to the Sea Trails, something or other, and they wanted to establish and maintain an equestrian trail all the way from Banning down to the Salton Sea that would connect with Cedar Trails off into the mountains. And all of the cities, Rancho Mirage and Palm Desert and all of them agreed to this. And so we've tried to establish this trail along the White Water Wash. Well, there was one bad break in it before this organization ever got going, and that was Thunderbird Country Club. And their golf course extends across the wash. And we couldn't go across their golf course obviously. And if we'd had our wits about us, I guess it was too late then, we would have gotten an established right of way between Thunderbird and Sunrise and back down into the wash. We neglected to do that. Or else that route was already closed off. But now that once you get beyond Thunderbird

you can go anywhere along the wash. Then the trail comes up on top of the wash here over to Monterey Avenue, Monterey Street, except it goes around that portion of Las Palmas that's on the Clancey Lane side of the wash. You know, the Las Palmas Golf Course has a portion of houses, of condominiums, here on this Clancey Lane side, so the trail goes along the top of the wash and then makes this jog around Las Palmas and then goes down into Monterey Avenue. But then Palm Desert on the other side didn't require that they leave that trail either in the bottom of the wash or on the top or wherever in the continuation which is Monterey Club on that side of the wash on the east side. So I don't know what's happened to that trail, you know. I mean, I feel that Palm Desert abrogated its treaty, frankly. But I don't think the council there probably was very interested in it. You would have had to get one or more members on their city council to really push it. That's the trouble with these things. Somebody has to be pushing, pushing, pushing all the time to bring these things about. But you can go on this side of Thunderbird up the wash and then under that bridge, that little small bridge, and then up past the school and all the way up into Magnesia Canyon. That

makes a nice ride.

PY: Did you ever go on, oh, outing, I mean, like barbecues or something like that like they used to do, anymore?

NT: No. Last year we went on quite a few of those desert riders rides. We haven't done that so much either this year. But that involves trailering our horses into a central starting place and joining up with them. And, you know, we used to ride, our girls would go just very recently, just a couple of years ago, all around the area out in the sand dunes and all, what is now the Monterey Country Club. Well, you just can't really get there anymore. Well, it has made a tremendous difference in the riding. There's just no getting around that. I don't know. There's a nice trail that goes up in back of the churches in Palm Desert and then goes on, connects on up to the mountains up on, it's either Dead Indian Canyon, I think it's Dead Indian, or the other one next, so I can't think of the name of it, you can go all the way up, sort of paralleling Highway 74. And we've done that. That's all mountainous trail riding. And for that flat kind of riding around the date groves and all that I mentioned before, there's just no more of that. I personally prefer that. I get kind of bored with trail

riding, mountainous riding.

PY: I was going to ask you another question about the development, your husband talks about the older Rancho Mirage area around Magnesia Falls.

NT: Yes.

PY: Was that where the earlier development took place?

NT: Yes. All of the early development took place there as far as homes went. And anything on the flat was more of a ranching nature.

PY: So when we've been talking about these people who tried to bring about housing developments here at Rancho Mirage, it's all been up in that area.

NT: Yes.

PY: I was just curious.

NT: All of the big developments in Rancho Mirage have come really since incorporation.

PY: That's one thing about incorporation.

NT: It's the ironic thing. The permits for Sunrise were issued under the county, and everything else has been issued under the city.

PY: So incorporation did not help growth or the . . .

NT: It did not help to slow down growth. Perhaps the most that you could say, perhaps it required or the city made

necessary a higher standard of growth. Perhaps they imposed stricter controls on the type of development. But a very curious thing happened and I'm not blaming anyone, I mean, there's nothing right or wrong about it. You either want to see the area develop quickly or you don't. But that original council that started out was definitely committed to the idea of keeping this sort of quiet residential community. Not against growth, but not this mushrooming growth. And then somehow those same people or the majority of them, let's put it that way, very soon, I'd say within a year and a half after incorporation, changed their thinking. And Bill Ralletzer, who was certainly committed in the early days to holding down growth, encouraged it tremendously. And he has said and I'm not telling any secrets that he'd like to see all of Rancho Mirage get developed just as fast as possible.

PY: Why did people change their minds so rapidly?

NT: I don't know. I don't know. You can, you know, imagine things, but probably shouldn't put them down in writing or tape. (laughter)

PY: Well, it's certainly gone on.

NT: But, you know, I'm convinced that it's been too much too

soon. There has been no plan, no master plan, for traffic. Just take that as item number one. There should have been some other main artery for getting from here to there besides Highway 111. It's almost too late now because I think land's too valuable. I don't know, cities can't buy it up and make a road out somewhere with feeder roads coming in. This was not thought out in advance. All of this flack that you hear about the bridges and so forth. Well, when there weren't all of these people living on the far side of the wash, it didn't make any difference if there was a flood. There was no concern about ambulance service or fire protection or police protection. Now the city is divided. But none of this, when these building permits were issued, nobody thought about that. Nobody thought we're going to get eight hundred condominiums here, seven hundred and fifty there, so many over here, and what if there's a flood, how are we going to get police cars back and forth? Or ambulances. Except Bob Hope Drive, of course. But, you see, this was not thought out in advance. And that is definitely, can be laid to blame, on the city councils of the cities involved. There's no question about that.

PY: Do you think the bridge on Bob Hope Drive will make an enormous change in the feeling of this area?

NT: Yes, I think it has. And I will say very frankly that I myself for very selfish reasons did not want to see it go in. They could have had a bridge anywhere they wanted, as far as that goes. But I didn't want it right next door here because I knew it would bring a lot more traffic. And the traffic noise that it has created is much greater because when the road dipped down into the wash, you couldn't hear the cars down there. Now you hear them. And the only time at night that it's really completely quiet is between about three in the morning, I can tell you what time it is at night without looking at the clock. But, you know, everybody thought, oh, it's wonderful. We'll have the bridge right here, so it will be so convenient for us. And it's one of those things that is so popular a concept that you really can't talk against it, you know. Motherhood and country.

PY: (laughter) Yes, that's true. It's true.

NT: But the congestion has created many problems and Lloyd says that the fire protection is really terrible. There's a citizens committee that did a report on fire protection in Rancho Mirage recently, and it is appalling to read it.

And, of course, now since the passage of Proposition 13, I'm not too up on all the ins and the outs of it, but I guess, you know, it's so much harder to do anything that can improve your services. There are ways of getting around it, but it's not that easy.

PY: I understood that owned other property in the area besides this property.

NT: No, my father owned Mother's ranch, well, actually he held it, it's held in trust for me, and as trustee he sold it. So Lloyd and I never owned it. We do own a piece of property up there at Pinon, just below Pinon Crest, but that's all that we own or ever have owned here.

PY: So you were never involved, say, with Deep Canyon.

NT: Oh, I'd forgotten about that. We exchanged some property with the Water District when they widened the wash on Mother's ranch. And as I say, it was in trust for me, at that time after Mother passed away. Rather than take money for the land that they took, they gave us an exchange in acreage up where Ironwood is now. And we sold that to subsequently. That's right. I'd forgotten about that.

PY: So you were involved with the property where the research center is now?

NT: No. No. Lloyd started the research center and worked for the University of California as director of the research center, but we didn't own any property there, if that's what you mean. No, we didn't.

PY: Oh, is that when he came down?

NT: Well, when he came down was with Cal Tech, and they had a mobile research laboratory, and they went up into Deep Canyon and other places in the southwest for that matter and did desert research. And then the University of California wanted to start this desert research center out there and eventually wound up, didn't they buy the mobile lab from Cal Tech?

LT: Or it was given to them. I forget. They took possession of it, yes.

PY: Do you want to talk a little about setting up that research center and its significance to the area?

LT: You have interviewed Pill Boyd?

PY: I haven't been able to get ahold of him yet. I saw him in December and that was it. Mystery man.

LT: I don't know why. Gee, he's here. Should be easy to get ahold of.

PY: I think I probably have not caught him at the right time.

LT: Yes. Because he has a house, you know, in Riverside, and

then lives in but he's here more of a week than he's in Riverside. And he always, I mean, when he's here, he's at the Living Desert practically all the time.

PY: That's a rush to get him.

LT: Yes, but I think that's your best bet to get him. Well, anyway, he was a real, one of the because he owned the land and was a regent of the university at the time and has always been tremendously interested in the natural history of the desert. And I think he kind of got the idea when he saw our Cal Tech Mobile Desert Laboratory going up and using that land that maybe this is how he could make the kind of use he would like to make out of it by having the university turn it into a field research station. He'd gotten the land originally from the Southern Pacific because at that time I think Deep Canyon was almost a year round stream coming down out of the proverbial They even used to have an old irrigation ditch that you can still see the remains of, take the water all the way down to, where there's a little farm there where the highway is now, Highway 111, that far down. They would transport the water.

PY: Wilson?

LT: I forget.

PY: You mean where the Adobe Gardens has that house?

LT: Probably, yes.

PY: Yes.

LT: Right, yes. The remains of the ditch is not down there anymore, so the only place you can see it now is up higher. But the Southern Pacific in those days, all that Phil wanted was one section. They said, well, if we're going to sell you one, you're going to have to take two more. We don't sell any less than three, so (laughter) nowadays, they won't sell anything, not one square inch. So that's how he got those three sections of land and then he got this idea. And he can tell you all that part about turning it into a research station in which he contributed, I know, a great deal of the initial funding. We got quite a bit of funding then from the Natural Sciences Foundation. And then I was there for many years as sort of the field director, not living there, but living here at our old place but working up there.

PY: What is the significance of the research center for this area?

LT: What do you mean by significance, significance in what terms for this area? Do you mean for the economic

development of the area? What would you mean by significance because it's . . .

PY: What do you see as significant?

LT: Well, you say, you said for this area. Now remember this is a research center for studying the plants and animals of the desert, finding out about them. That may not have any direct significance right here, anymore than if we had a field station down on the Panama Canal and you learn something about the, you know, tropical wildlife. That information disseminated worldwide and just becomes the body of part of the worldwide body of knowledge. So that's why I was wondering what you were getting at when you said significance for this area. Is it a prestige factor, like in the sense the Eisenhower Medical Center is. Of course, the Eisenhower Medical Center provides immediate services to the area, but I don't think the Canyon Research Center does that. Now it does it indirectly through the Living Desert because lots of the scientific discoveries that are made through research at Deep Canyon are then interpreted to the public at the Living Desert which, as you know, also is Phil Boyd's big . . .

PY: I was thinking of it more in terms of the fact that we're

losing so much of the desert here.

LT: Oh. In that sense, it is very significant because it has put aside a very large area, but I think if you include BLM lands now, it's something like fifteen thousand acres that are within what we call the Deep Canyon Desert Research Center holdings and to pretty much in perpituity to be preserved as a natural desert, that nothing else could be done with it. Now not all of that is owned outright by the university, but let's say that some of it is BLM, but all of the lands that are owned by the university, I think it was stated in the original charter or however the Deep Canyon was set up, that land could be used only for research purposes and desert biology. That is, you couldn't go and put a medical center or something like that there. So in that sense it's significant in that it is preserving a wild desert for the future. As we know, so much of it is getting built up now.

PY: Is there anything else about the research center that you feel is important?

LT: Well, no, not necessarily, that I can think of offhand.

NT: I think perhaps I should make the obvious comment that Lloyd, like most scientists, looks at these things that

pure research is valuable for itself even if it isn't used until a hundred years from now. Or maybe never. You've increased your knowledge. It doesn't have to have a practical application. You aren't solving a specific problem. You aren't even doing something worthwhile as stamping out as measles, you see. But maybe something that you learn will be of a benefit to mankind later on. And so I think that, you know, you didn't say this, but I think most scientists have this strong feeling for what's known as pure research. That it is very valuable, even though you don't see an immediate return from it.

PY: Sounds like those taped interviews.

NT: (laughter)

LT: Of course, you realize also it is part now of the state-wide system of reserves that the university has. I don't know how many the university has now, fifteen, twenty of them, idea being trying to get all the different types of terrain, vegetation types and so on in the state of California under this university system. And so this is the one for the low desert. So that's another significant part of it. It's a part of this bigger system that the university has of land holdings for preserving land as it was in its natural state. Have

you been up there?

PY: I've not been through it enough.

LT: Yes. Yon Zabrisky is there, living there now, and then Bill Jennings, the former newspaper man, can give you a lot of stuff, you know, about the operations of recent years.

PY: And Bill Jennings is there?

LT: No, he operates out of Riverside. It's probably easier to get him through the Department of Biology at Riverside. I don't know how, he comes out here every so often, a couple of days a week or so.

PY: UCR?

LT: Yes. It should be easy just to call up UCR. Then Dr. Wilbur Mayhew at UCR is the actual director now.

PY: And that was your position for awhile?

LT: No, well, I'd be what you might call field director. I was clear in the field, and Dr. Mayhew, he's a professor at the, at UCR, but in overall charge of the Deep Canyon station. But he's a great talker and he can give you a lot of information.

PY: Okay. While you were gone, we were talking a little bit about the early city council.

LT: Yes.

PY: And how it had sort of, some of the people who had been for or against the rapid growth suddenly changed sort of. And I was wondering if you could shed any light on that.

LT: People who have been against rapid growth changed.

PY: That's not clear?

NT: I just pointed out that the very big growth has taken place in Rancho Mirage except for Sunrise which was granted its permit under the county has all taken place since the incorporation, which says something for incorporation and since the idea really was to keep this small, residential community, not against growth and I think that everyone on that early council started out feeling that way.

LT: As I say, one of the reasons for incorporating, of course, and I think that everybody felt that way. It's a difficult thing for me to say because I don't like to put words in the mouths of my colleagues which may be totally wrong. But I can just give you my opinion of what I think happened. And Bill from Thunderbird Country Club who was our first mayor. I agree with Nona. And it was really Bill and I who then, we were the head of the original corporation committee. But he

felt as strongly as I did at that time that we were really setting this up to control the future growth of the area. We hired a very aggressive city manager by the name of Bill Covert and he, as I learned later, for various reasons, was very much in favor and wanted to promote very rapid growth. So it was fairly easy for him to work with Bill because Bill had been all his life a businessman. He was totally business oriented and had run his own corporation. Was the incorporation I guess because there was nobody else but himself in it. He and his manager were very highly successful, made a heck a lot of money. But the whole point, of course, that kind of an operation is to make money. And I think, as I saw it happening, Bill Covert, our city manager, was able to finally bring Bill around to the point of view that the whole point of the city is to make money. And this is very natural because Bill was basically a businessman and only saw those things in that term. And how do you make money in Rancho Mirage? By having more and more development because we get our source of income at that time and still is to a large extent primarily from what we call development tax. That is on every development we tax it so much.

Every building and so on. So this is our big source of revenue, so naturally the more development you have and the faster the place developed the more money that came pouring into the city and this rapidly building up would be, well, you know, surplus. And then we could spend a million and a half for city hall and things like that. So to a businessman this looked good, you know. We were now a successful city because we were financially successful. But my argument was that in this process, we were reducing the quality of life, of the inhabitants of the area. And doing the very thing that they had set up the city to stop. But we were caught in this vicious circle that the way we could get money was by more development. And so this caused the basic split on the Rancho Mirage city council which is very deep and fundamental between, to simplify it, those who wanted growth to go as rapidly and that is to actually promote the growth of Rancho Mirage and bringing in everything you could as fast as you could, and those who wanted to go as slowly as you could make it. And in all the early days the pro-growth people had three votes in the council which gave them absolute control versus two votes that was opposing it. All we could do would be to scream to

high heaven against it. We couldn't stop it.

PY: Who else was opposed to the growth?

LT: Edna Warner who was just yesterday defeated for re-election. So that will give you a sign of where we're going in the future, too. (chuckle)

NT: Yes.

PY: Is there anything we haven't covered that you feel is important?

LT: For Rancho Mirage area?

PY: Yes.

LT: Well, things like the old mine back up in here which has never been able to find a history of. That should be dug into by somebody someday.

PY: Mine?

LT: Yes. There's an old mine there and there's an old well-defined trail that goes up to it, apparently from what I've been told. I can't even remember who'd tell me those things. They used to have a burro train to take their supplies up to this mine. You know, that probably goes way, way back. But who did it and when and what were they after, I mean the workings are still there, not a mine as a present mine, but I mean they were diggings of a fair size. I think it was operated for

awhile and I don't imagine it's ever probably profitable so it ceased.

NT: And I mean what. (laughter)

LT: I'm not even sure now. (chuckle) Well, it would be something of no great, you know, people now would not

It would be something someday to look into.

NT: There was out on Mother's ranch and there were two old abandoned wells, one that had the remains of some buildings around that I have no idea or if I ever knew, I've forgotten, when they dated back. That was sort of interesting because by the time, we didn't even know they existed when we bought the property. And then we discovered them wandering around. And no sign of any vegetation left there anymore. Somebody much earlier must have tried homesteading there. And we lowered a string a rock or something down, you know, and there was still water in one of them, about ninety feet as I recall. You know, if there was a date on it anywhere, something like that would be fun to preserve before that's all developed before the springs makes their. . . .

LT: Yes.

NT: Enlargement.

PY: They're taking over that property?

NT: Yes. That's my . . .

LT: They've already bought it. Probably have condominiums over there and a golf course shortly.

PY: When people built ranches out in this area or early homes, were they all using wells?

NT: Yes.

LT: And today all the water is well water. Unlike Palm Springs, it's got some water from the streams from the mountainside, but out in the cove communities it's totally well water, entirely. Entirely dependent on wells. The irrigation we do here now still is being pumped up from the ground.

PY: But that's all part of the Coachella Valley Water District's percolation.

LT: Any under the control of the Coachella Water District. No, right here for example we have our own mutual irrigation company of about, what, I don't know how many properties are on it now, maybe ten or so.

NT: Yes.

LT: And so we have our own little company that supplies the irrigation water to these places that still use it. And there are a number of little things like that still left in the area that date back from the old days.

PY: Such as.

LT: Oh, there's another one up there that Ben Vallett has on Country Club Drive, those date groves up there. There's a separate little water company. And I think there's some in Palm Desert.

PY: Right. At Palm Village I think they still have, old Palm Village area.

LT: That's right.

PY: Do they?

LT: Yes. And I don't know whether at Rancho Manana. They probably got that water from the Water District.

NT: They probably did. I don't think they were ever on our system, were they?

LT: Not in our system. They had their own well.

NT: Yes.

LT: Just like you did at the ranch.

NT: Yes, well, maybe they still use that.

LT: Yes, well, that's what I mean.

NT: I don't know.

LT: They very likely are still, in other words, they pump their own water for their own, a lot of them have their own pressure tank, their own domestic supply. We now get our water here from Coachella Valley, our domestic

water because we had a separate pump and we used to supply all these holdings with domestic water. And that was coming off The water district wanted to run their main line through down Clancey Lane to get that development over there, but there's a law that says they can't go through somebody else's water district, so on that basis we were able to make a deal whereby they would take us over no cost and provide our water and then they'd have the right of way to go through. So fortunately we got out of the domestic water business. But we still run the irrigation well.

PY: Is Rancho Mirage on sewage or on sewer.

LT: The Water District provides the sewage, the Coachella Valley Water District. Not all of it, just the areas that are within the sewer districts that have been set up and were taxed accordingly. Any new development that comes in has to be part of the sewage system. But like this house here is not on sewer. It's got septic tanks like so many of the old ones do.

NT: But we're in the district and we're taxed accordingly.

LT: If we were ever to develop this piece of property here.

NT: Sort of a standby charge.

LT: Yes. And we would have to go on the sewer lines. The

I think the history of the White Water River itself through this area or, you know, some of the big floods and the Water District has that in their various books. The big flood in 1916 and one in 1938 and so on and what that did to this area right here. Useful record to have.

PY: Do you want to . . .

LT: People are surprised today whenever the river flows, and they shouldn't be. They've become accustomed, you see, to many dry years. We've been in a real drought period, but we're sure as heck going to go into a wet phase of the weather cycle again.

PY: Well, didn't it use to be that Magnesia Falls was a year-round pond up there?

LT: Yes, it was a big swimming hole. I've got a photograph of it here. Helen Dengler at that . . . and from when we came in 1957 until the summer of 1976, Magnesia Canyon, the stream in it, was dry except for, you know, flow and for flash flood or something like that, then stop. But since 1976, and that's true of so many of these other canyons, it's been fogged year round. Just all of a sudden there's been a big increase now in the water supply in those mountains. But this is the way a desert area goes, fluctuates from one extreme to the other.

PY: You know probably better than most people do.

LT: I'm trying to think of something historical about the, you know, a third of Rancho Mirage is in the mountains back there, the city.

PY: Really?

LT: Yes. Yes, our boundary takes all of the, practically all of the Magnesia Canyon water shed. We have beautiful, you know, just wild, wild desert back in there. The big bighorn have, that's why our emblem, you may have seen it, it's the head of a bighorn sheep.

PY: Any plans to develop that?

LT: We have it zoned against it. But there are plenty of plans to develop it yet. But if you don't have the right people on the council, you can't hold the zoning. That's the sad part.

PY: Oh. Do you have a photograph of the old water hole in Magnesia Falls or has Helen Dengler got it?

LT: I have a copy of hers.

PY: I see.

LT: Yes. Do you want to see it or do you just want to know about it?

NT: Music story. It may be apocryphal. It has more to do with Palm Desert. You know that big old building on the

far side, you know where the Crocker Bank is in Palm Desert.

PY: Yes.

NT: And it's on the far side of it. Do you know the name of that place, who owns that?

LT: Trying to think of the corner you're talking about, Crocker Bank.

NT: Well, I'm not describing it very well.

LT: Whereabouts in Palm Desert?

NT: Well, you know . . .

LT: What street?

NT: As you go into Indian Wells Country Club, if you were going into the slaughters.

LT: Yes.

NT: That's that Crocker Bank there.

LT: Oh, way down there.

NT: Way down there.

LT: Oh, in Indian Wells you're talking about.

NT: Yes.

LT: Not Palm Desert.

NT: No, Indian Wells.

LT: Yes, okay, now I'm with you.

NT: And you know just beyond it, on the same side of the

street towards Indio.

LT: Yes.

NT: Old Spanish-style house, but it dates back to the . . . .

LT: Yes, right. Set up on a . . .

PY: Doc Gurley's house.

LT: Doc Gurley's, right.

NT: Oh, all right, Doc Gurley's. The story which I say may apocryphal is that this woman owned it. I don't know whether it was a Mrs. Gurley or not, probably not, at the time of the first, no, second world war.

LT: Oh.

NT: And Patton's troops were training here. And she would entertain some of the fellows on weekends and so forth. She grew quite fond of this one boy and she, you know, said you take care of yourself and don't let anything happen to you when you're overseas. And if you get back safe and sound and alive, I will give you this property and did.

LT: Yes.

NT: And that's how it got into the present ownership. As I say, I don't know whether that's really exactly accurate or whether he then sold it to Gurley or, you know, it's sort of a nice story.

LT: Yes. It reminds me, too, that Patton's officers were quartered here in Rancho Mirage when he was training.

TAPE 2, SIDE 1:

LT: In the Magnesia Falls area like on Sahara Road mingled in where those, all those houses are now. These first ones weren't built like we do today. Everything, you know, side by side. They were scattered around more like they were, see it in La Quinta. So I have all that tabulated, documented, someplace. So as I say, whenever you got a really, because I've been wondering what to do with this stuff, a lot of the city files I just . . . Finally I got so mad because the city wasn't taking care of it, I just hauled it out and put it in cardboard boxes in our garage here. So stuff that I thought might be of some historical value someday. And that, I think, is one of the most important things that an historical society can do is to get a safe place where they can keep the stuff and have it properly, you know, catalogued and so on, organized. But it takes a lot of work.

PY: That's true, but the first step is just to make sure that it's saved because so often it's thrown away.

LT: Right. Yes, right.

PY: I think we're moving in that direction.

LT: Good.

PY: Initially, yes. That there is an awareness.

LT: Yes.

PY: You know, it's important to save those records. And so often those early records are thrown away.

LT: Yes. Right.

NT: Well, Phil Boyd, when he was operating the Red Roof Ranch in Rancho Mirage for awhile, he could tell you.

LT: Oh, he could tell you so much about the early days.

PY: I didn't realize he was here so much.

LT: Yes, yes.

NT: Yes.

LT: Because when he was in Palm Springs, he was the first mayor of Palm Springs, he had a house in Palm Springs. And then that period when they lived out here.

NT: And then . . .

LT: They reside in Rancho Mirage.

NT: Where the Living Desert is now. When did they acquire that property? They lived there.

LT: They lived there a long time ago.

NT: Long time ago.

LT: Yes.

PY: There used to be a woman who had a ranch on the south side of 111 near, what's that thing, Mirage Cove or something, it's near Mirage right where the Chinese restaurant is separating Thunderbird area from . . .

NT: Oh.

PY: The rest of Rancho Mirage. Where the bridge is. You were talking about it earlier.

NT: Yes. I don't know about . . .

LT: I don't know about that.

PY: She was a Hollywood person it seems to me.

LT: Oh, really.

PY: Yes. She used to have these large parties, but anyway, that's beside the point. She . . .

LT: That wouldn't be Ruth Warburton, would it?

PY: Ruth Warburton?

LT: Yes. Which side of the highway?

PY: South side. No, I'm sorry.

LT: On the mountain side?

PY: It's not the south side. It's the north side.

LT: North side.

NT: On the mountain side.

PY: Yes. I'm sorry; I was wrong.

LT: On the mountain side. That's the south side.

PY: Right. I mixed it up.

LT: Okay. Okay, if it's the mountain side, then it wouldn't be.

NT: No.

LT: Now that I'd never heard of. No, that's a new one on me. Never remember coming across that.

NT: Nor I.

LT: Right in that, you know where, in that area near where Dr. Jackson's animal, vet, in that little cove part.

PY: I had the understanding it was further on up. You couldn't see it.

LT: No. Well, up right by the school?

PY: Could have been.

LT: Yes.

PY: It might even have gone across the other side of that automobile thing, I'm not sure.

LT: No, I don't, never heard of that before.

NT: Too bad how much you know and it just sort of slips by. You don't pay any attention, you know. It doesn't seem important at the time.

PY: Yes.

LT: What's been discouraging here, too, because we've got newcomers that come in. They couldn't care less about

the history of this area.

PY: Well, I think it's also because they haven't been inspired to want to know about it. What they know about is right now and the country clubs.

LT: That's all they're interested in is the totally different environment than what it used to be and they couldn't care less about the golden part of it. (chuckle)

PY: Anything else? Do you remember Indian Wells before it developed as it is now when they used to have the store and the post office, and there was a trailer park? At one point there was even an old schoolhouse there.

NT: I don't think so. Do you?

LT: No, I don't.

PY: It was in before, it was in the forties, early forties.

NT: Yes.

PY: Did you spend much time going towards Indio at all or was it always toward Palm Springs?

NT: Well, we went towards Indio some because we had a few animals on the ranch as well as the dates, and we'd go there for feed and so forth. But I was in school, in grade school, at that time. So, you know, I probably didn't go down on many trips to get chicken feed and that kind of thing. So I, see, that's the trouble with my

recollections. I was pretty young and it didn't register too much.

PY: Where were you going to school?

NT: I went to school first to a little private school in Palm Springs. But it's no longer existent, and then to Palm Springs High School.

PY: Now was there a bus or did your parents have to . . .

NT: There was a bus, not to the private school, but to the high school.

PY: Was there a sense of being on the outskirts of Palm Springs? In other words, did you tend to group together, the kids going to . . .

NT: I felt kind of left out of things. (laughter) You know, it would have been nicer to be closer into where the action was.

PY: Were there other children in this area that were going to school?

NT: Not close at hand that I remember. The bus would stop and pick up different people along the way, you know, but not really . . . Mother had so much space around that area. And there wasn't room for anybody to be close.

PY: Who did you play with?

NT: Well, not at home much, just at school. It was sort of

lonely in that respect. I can't really think of anything else of great interest.

PY: Even in the fifties was there a sense of this, the valley itself, being isolated from the rest of the L. A. Basin and southern California? Was there a sense of it being different?

NT: Well, I know a lot of musically-inclined people who said it's a musical desert in more ways than one. I think if there was a sense of being different, I would feel that it was with a certain amount of pride that we had this marvelous climate here and it was such a treat for anybody to come here for any portion of the winter and so forth. I don't think the people who were here felt isolated in the sense of being remote and out of touch with the mainstream, would be my feeling. What do you think?

LT: I think so. What's certainly lacking today is any community spirit.

PY: Can you elaborate on that?

LT: Well, all these rural cities within the city, you know. You take the people of Sunrise, they don't care about anything except within their compound. Monterey or the Springs or Desert Island. There's no sense of Rancho

Mirage as a community. It's bad.

NT: And that's something I think probably no one really foresaw that in the process of growing it would grow not in single-family homes scattered around, but these entities of walled country clubs. And you know their whole social life revolves mainly around their own little club. I don't think anyone thought of that.

LT: No, I mean, that just happened to come that way.

NT: And the condominium is a fairly new development on the scene, anyhow, as far as a type of building, isn't it?

LT: But as we look back in the history of the city of Rancho Mirage, this was promoted and encouraged by the pro-growth portions on the city.

NT: Yes.

LT: Because these are the big developments and they were going to be the lucrative developments. And single-family homes were actually discouraged in a way.

PY: How was that?

LT: Well, just that the big developments got all the favors from the city like Las Palmas over here because Sunrise started during the county. They seemed less interested in just somebody putting up, I mean they didn't try to stop it, but I mean, you were less interesting in some-

body putting up, you didn't try to stop him, but I mean, you were less interested in somebody putting up a house someplace.

money to pour into the city treasury. But that's what really what has made Rancho Mirage what it is today.

I guess that's what we have to say it is, isn't it. It's mainly these separate areas, walled-in areas.

PY: Do you think that means that we change from being a permanent residence to mainly people feeling they're here only part time?

LT: To a large extent, but not entirely. There's a lot of people who live, for example, like in Sunrise who are permanent residents, but an awful lot are not, too. You know, But that is true. You see an awful lot now to whom this is not really home. Home is somewhere else. And so they won't get interested in this area. They won't help you in trying to save the things. But I know they themselves would like to save because they've come here to play. And they say, we're not going to get engaged. And I don't blame them. They're not going to get engaged in the battles here. We've have to do that at our home. So that's made it difficult and I think it was very sad that Rancho Mirage has developed

this way with much less. I suspect that Palm Desert has more community spirit than we have.

NT: I suspect so and it was rather interesting one night last winter we were the having dinner with our two girls. And we were expressing some of these things, something I suppose had happened at a council meeting recently. And the lady sitting next to one of us sort of tuned in on this conversation. She finally couldn't stand it any longer and she began talking to us about it. And she agreed, you know, a hundred percent with what we were saying. She has lived here for about a year, or had lived here for about a year. I think right over here in this Desert Villas. But she doesn't vote here. She votes wherever, I forget now she came from. It was interesting because when she realized, you know, what had been going on and how it was going to get even more crowded and so forth, and it was what she had come to get away from and what she liked about it, and she was really very upset. And yet there wasn't much of anything she could do if she didn't vote here. And I think there probably are a great number of people who are weekend visitors or winter visitors or part-time visitors that

feel the same way. But I think you're right that Palm Desert probably does have a stronger sense of community because most of our residents here are in these big condominiums with, as I said, their own social life. There's Mission Hills, there's Tamarisk, there's Desert Island, there's the Springs, there's Sunrise, there's Las Palmas.

LT: And each one is a little community of itself, see, which really can make a very interesting sociological study of how the whole interacts into one larger community. That's what we are. We're made up of, we are a community of all these little separate entities.

PY: And yet there's a real, there's still a sense of Rancho Mirage being not Palm Desert, not Cathedral City.

LT: Oh, very definitely because the country clubs were scared stiff of being taken over. See, in those days, Cathedral City was trying to incorporate too. And the county was trying to make one city in the valley wants it too, and anyway Bob Hope was going to be the dividing line. And everything the other side of Bob Hope including Thunderbird and Tamarisk was going to be put in Cathedral City. Well, that's the last thing in the world those people wanted, you see. And that because Cathedral City would

have the voting power, you see. And so they would be run by the people in Cathedral City, and that was why we were able to bring them into our incorporation efforts because they were afraid Cathedral City and, oh, they really weren't interested in becoming a city, but they saw the handwriting on the wall and they also didn't join us. They were going to be taken over by Cathedral City. And then these people up here in the Magnesia Falls area, they were made, as I said before, because Palm Desert was threatening to take over. I found that out. They didn't want that.

PY: So what you're saying . . .

LT: So there is, and in those days there was very intense rivalry by the so-called Rancho Mirage area versus the so-called Palm Desert area, very intense. Now that's all simmered down and beginning even a little talk, not much. I think maybe all these should be united in the name of efficiency.

PY: So what I'm hearing is that it was a reaction to being taken over by, you know, existing areas rather than a feeling of being Rancho Mirage.

LT: Oh, some like Tamarisk never felt a part of Rancho Mirage. It was a totally foreign concept to the whole Tamarisk area

to be called Rancho Mirage.

NT: Thunderbird got their mail at Box Y or something in Palm Springs, didn't they?

LT: Yes. I think because they couldn't stand to have any other name but Palm Springs, you know. That was the name. They didn't want to be associated with something called Rancho Mirage. And we had an awful battle in the early days to preserve the name of Rancho Mirage in incorporation. All the country club people wanted it changed to their name. They wanted it called Golf City. And this was one of my first big battles with them was to defeat that and keep the name Rancho Mirage. Golf City, you know, like Oil City. Gee, what a name. (chuckle) Well, that's what they wanted.

PY: That's pretty . . .

NT: Corny.

PY: They named the City of Industry.

NT: Yes.

LT: But, no, Rancho Mirage as such, that meant nothing to them. The real place that was Rancho Mirage and what some of us still refer to as Old Rancho Mirage in this area is now the business strip on the highway, and then that residential area on the cove up there. Those people

they called themselves Rancho Mirage and they had a strong sense of being one community, the community of Rancho Mirage. Then as you came out here, it was all questionable whether the agricultural area really called themselves Rancho Mirage or what, you know. They definitely were not Palm Desert but, you know, that was Rancho Mirage was up there where the post office was. That original subdivision.

PY: I'd heard that they called themselves Rancho Del Sol at one point.

LT: You mean right here.

PY: Yes.

LT: Yes, these were the Rancho Del Sol. That was the original name given by the name who developed these farms here. That was what we now call the Clancey Lane area.

NT: Probably more, too. It probably went across over there to . . .

LT: Way on the other side of what's now Bob Hope Drive, right.

NT: And the street name of Rio Del Sol Road was named after his Rancho Del Sol.

LT: Yes, he gave it the name. And he was the first one that cut his mules in, cut the crossing here on White Water River which was sheer bank. Had to cut out in order to

make a trail so that you could get from the other side over here to where the ranches were. And that road that he cut out he called Rio Del Sol. That was one of the oldest place names around here. One of the reasons why we were very distressed about having it changed to the name of a comedian. In fact, our address was on Rio Del Sol Road over there, but when it became, that was our official address, whatever our number was, Rio Del Sol Road. But when the County Board of Supervisors changed it to Bob Hope Drive, we fortunately were able to get a Clancey Lane address.

NT: The very next morning we went down to stop it.

LT: Our property is off Clancey Lane Road.

NT: We said give us a Clancey Lane address because we owned the corner there, so they gave us our number.

LT: I got up a petition and everybody who lived on Rio Del Sol Road, everybody, with one exception, signed the petition against the name change. That one exception was Les, who owned the service station up Center. And, of course, he thought it would be great to have a service station on Bob Hope Drive. But Bob Hope called me up and talked for about an hour on the telephone. He said, he just couldn't understand why we were opposing that

name change. He said, don't you see what it's going to do to your property value? He said, it's going to raise them. I said, well, okay, Bob, but what you don't understand is that we don't want the property values to go up because this is our home. We're not living here to sell the land and move somewhere else. This is our home; we're going to stay here. And if the property values go up, the taxes will go up, too. He couldn't in all sincerity, he really couldn't understand that because he's used to more, as you know, he's a tremendous landowner, but he's used to dealing in land simply as speculation, you know. Buy today and sell tomorrow at a big profit. That's the point of owning land as far as he's concerned.

PY: Do you think he's had an influence on this area?

LT: Bob Hope?

PY: Yes.

LT: Well, the Eisenhower Medical Center, to the extent that he participated in that. What other kind of, do you mean, he's a member of the Tamarisk Country Club, you know. What they lived in until they moved into their present place. Their house was in Palm Springs. Well, it still is. Their present house is in Palm Springs, too.

NT: Well, that's where the Hope Classic, though, the funds that they give to all the different charities in the area, and especially the Eisenhower Center. That's had an effect on the area.

LT: Oh, sure. On the whole area.

NT: Yes.

LT: Not just Rancho Mirage.

NT: Well, I meant on the whole desert.

LT: Oh, yes, appreciably.

PY: I was just curious if his influence was felt in terms of directions that the city has taken or . . .

LT: None whatsoever. No influence of any sort on the city government, if that's what you meant.

PY: Or I meant, you know, number of individuals that that block would . . .

LT: No, I don't think Bob Hope has been involved in anything like that. I really don't. I've never known it, nor has Or Frank Sinatra for that matter until just recently.

PY: Did having these celebrities living here, has it made a difference?

LT: In what way?

PY: Their name, adding their name to the area, or, for instance,

you know, when Eisenhower used to be in Indian Wells and Palm Desert area. It had an enormous change, just in terms of datelines moving from Palm Springs to Indian Wells, and particularly Palm Desert so that you could say just his presence in the area was an enormous influence on the media.

LT: Well, you can say that with Ford moving in Rancho Mirage now. When Ford was, you know, deciding whether or not to run by the president, the dateline Rancho Mirage then went all over the country, which is, I guess, the first time outside of some of the sports events that that has happened. So in that sense, yes. But, I don't know; there's not necessarily anything beneficial about that, though.

PY: Well, it's just a recognition of the area as being something . . .

LT: Yes. But for recognition of the area as being something separate from Palm Springs because heretofore, for a long while, you know, outside of the valley, the whole area was known as Palm Springs. You never heard of Palm Desert or Rancho Mirage. You'd say so and so, even though he's doing it in Rancho Mirage, you'd say he's doing it in Palm Springs because that's what people had

heard about. They naturally hadn't heard of Rancho Mirage. But I think Rancho Mirage seems to be getting, for better or worse, a little name of its own now. But it's due to people like Ford living here yet.

PY: How about Annenberg or Frank Sinatra?

LT: And Annenberg and to some extent get some picture that appeared in the National Geographic the other day referred to Palm Springs Road probably been stated, Palm Springs Road in Rancho Mirage.

NT: Well, Edna Warner fought the battle all the time with the sports events because they'd dateline at Palm Springs, and she'd just go crazy. And she'd tell us on the TV stations and the radio stations and everybody else, you know, and carry on over it.

LT: Yes, she did an awful lot to promote the name Rancho Mirage whereas I opposed of that Why tell anybody about it? (chuckle) Keep it quiet. But, no, this is out of pride of your company, your pride of community, you know. And you want to tell the world about Rancho Mirage. Not necessarily in order to bring more people, but of course that was going to happen.

PY: Anything else? We've been talking for awhile here to me. Probably you have other things to do.

NT: I can't think of anything else.

PY: You've been most gracious.

NT: I don't know that we've added much, I hope so.

PY: I think it all sort of adds up at the end.

LT: Yes, that's right. When you put these sort of things together

PY: In the meantime I'm going to try to pool it according to history. (laughter)

LT: Yes.

PY: Well, I can give you the history of the last person I talked to.

LT: Yes. But I'd sure recommend talking to Phil Boyd if you can get him going. He's a little bit difficult. He's very wary about these sort of things. I know newspaper reporters don't really have any success with him at all. I can't tell you exactly how to approach him, but he knows you're just doing it, just history for the Palm Desert Historical Society, I think you'll get good cooperation from him.

PY: He said he would be glad to. It's just that I haven't been able to get back with him.

LT: Yes, right.

NT: And you did talk to Helen Clancey.

PY: Helen, I went to see her and she was not feeling well so we just sort of talked off the record a bit, and actually I haven't been able to get back with her. She's never home.

LT: Well, you should.

NT: Well, she's been in and out of the hospital this last year and this year an awful lot. And she has like a chronical bronchial condition. Just anything seems to set it off, so she really is not well. And, of course, if she's feeling she can't talk a lot.

PY: That was the problem the day I went over.

LT: But she can tell you so much about the early days here, settlement, cultural area. And the other one you should talk to is Hilda Mayer.

PY: That's right. You mentioned her to me.

LT: Yes.

PY: Do you know where she is now?

LT: She's in a trailer park over on . . .

END OF INTERVIEW